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ST. PAUL AND THE PRIESTS.

To those of our Roman Catholic friends who are in the habit of declining all inquiry upon religious matters, and prefer to submit implicitly to the guidance of their spiritual advisers, we would earnestly recommend the attentive consideration of the life of one whom they, in common with us, regard as one of the noblest of Christian heroes, and whose conversion to the true faith is specially commemorated by their Church about the present season.*

Many, perhaps, are in the habit of regarding St. Paul before his conversion as a blood-thirsty and ferocious bigot, hating God and all religion, and holding no feelings in common with any who bear the name of Christians; but a very slight examination will be sufficient to show that this cannot be a just view of the case. St. Paul was never without an earnest regard for religion; at no time was he an infidel, a vicious or even a thoughtless man; he was from his infancy a member of the divinely established Jewish Church, "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Philipp. 3, 5). In his youth he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 23, 3) an universally esteemed and honoured doctor of the law (Acts 5, 34) and carefully instructed in the rules and observances of the Jewish fathers (Acts 22, 3). Unlike many young men, he took a deep and thorough interest in the religious instruction he received, and became, as he tells us, "exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers" (Gal. 1, 14) and the time-honoured institutions of the Jewish Church. The Christian doctrine he regarded as a new religion which would change these institutions (Acts 6, 14) or bring them into disrepute, and he was conscientiously persuaded that it was his bounden duty to oppose and destroy this heretical and upstart system. "He verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26, 9). Samuel did God service by hewing Agag in pieces (1 Sam. 15, 32) and Elijah by slaying the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18, 40), and so Saul believed that it was right for him to persecute even unto death the teachers of doctrines which seemed to him false and hurtful, and in this belief he was confirmed by those who ought to have known better—his religious teachers and advisers, the rulers of the Jewish Church. He set out on his memorable journey to Damascus armed with full ecclesiastical authority, having received letters from the High Priest and all the estate of the elders, that if he found there any of that way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem to be punished (see Acts 22, 5; 9, 2; and 26, 10 and 12).^b

Here, then, we have the character of the unconverted Saul, and it is well worthy of our earnest consideration. In him we have a man of eminent talents (as his writings abundantly testify), highly educated, for the age in which he lived; earnest, conscientious, entirely above the influence of those low and vulgar vices by which so many are enslaved, zealous for what he believed the cause of truth and the honour of the Church of God, devoting himself, we may say, to the service of religion, and acting not upon his own individual responsibility, but with the sanction and concurrence of his spiritual advisers, advisers, as he remembered, who held a divine commission and were descended in unbroken succession from a High Priest appointed by the Lord Himself; and yet this very man, with all his talent, and knowledge of Scripture, and earnestness, and advantages, was utterly ignorant of the true way to please God; and while he thought he was engaged in a good work, he was really guilty of what all Roman Catholics and Christians of every class would agree in condemning as a most execrable crime.

And whence this strange religious darkness?

Paul's error arose from his bringing a prejudiced and unfair mind to the consideration of divine truth. There were some things about the religion of Jesus which he disliked, and he would listen to no argument in its favour. It seemed to lower the dignity of the Jewish Church. Instead of maintaining the importance and perpetuity of the rites and customs ordained by Moses, it regarded them as institutions, useful, indeed, for a time, but which had done their work and were no longer necessary. Instead of proclaiming a future glorious Messiah, who was to conquer all the enemies of Israel and restore them to freedom and exalt them above all the nations of the earth, it declared that the Son of God had appeared on earth as a man of humble

station, and been crucified as a malefactor at the instigation of those very priests who ought to have been the first to acknowledge and welcome him. Had he patiently listened to and candidly considered St. Stephen's exposition of the Scriptures, and the arguments of the other Christian teachers, he would have learned that his prejudices were unfounded, that Christianity instead of dishonouring the Jew's religion was its perfection and its end, "witnessed both by the law and the prophets" (Rom. 3, 21); and he would have been withheld from the commission of crimes, the thoughts of which, till the day of his death, filled him with remorse. But he would listen patiently to nothing. He scrupulously avoided all inquiry. What need was there for him to reason or argue out of Scripture when he had the anointed priests of God, the true interpreters of Scripture, upon his side? What need of argument or controversy to put down a system of belief which had sprung up but a few years ago, and whose recent origin was its sufficient condemnation. It seemed a much easier and simpler plan to put to death any Christians he could find, or to shut them up in prison; and this was the course approved of by the priests. Stephen and the Christians reasoned out of the Scriptures. Paul and the priests persecuted and threatened. Stephen, the martyr, studied, and quoted, and followed the written Word. Paul, the persecutor, submitted wholly to the authority of his appointed teachers and the rulers of the Jewish Church. Paul, indeed, became a great controversialist. Some of his epistles (that to the Galatians for example) are almost wholly controversial. His manner was, we read in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 17, 2), to reason out of the Scriptures. But this was after he became a convert to the faith of Christ. Before his conversion we look in vain for a single argument against what he considered heresy. He "breathed out" only "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."

But, not to weary our readers by carrying out this subject to too great length, there are four points connected with St. Paul's history to which we would solicit their earnest attention.

1st. That while before his conversion he never seems to have used any arguments in support of his opinions, it was his custom afterwards to "give reasons of the hope that was in him" (Acts 17, 2 and 17; 16, 13, &c., &c.)

2nd. That while before his conversion he seems implicitly to have followed the teaching of his spiritual advisers, he afterwards recognized the higher duty of comparing their injunctions with the revealed will of God, "not conferring with flesh and blood" only (Gal. 1, 16), but seeking by earnest prayer for instruction and guidance from on high (Acts 9, 11).

3rd. That after his conversion he was called a heretic by those who regarded themselves as members of the only true Church (Acts 24, 5, and 14).

4th. That while before his conversion he was "exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers" (Gal. 1, 14), he afterwards made the written word his rule of faith, "Believing all things that were written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24, 14).

Whether St. Paul's principles after his conversion resembled more those of the Romish or the Reformed Church, we leave it for any candid and well-informed Christian to decide; for ourselves we believe that there would be but little difference among honest and fair-minded men upon religious questions, if they could only be brought patiently and earnestly, without prejudice or party spirit, and in dependence upon that heavenly teaching which is promised to all who truly seek it, to endeavour to ascertain the revealed will of God; and it is our earnest prayer for ourselves, and our Roman Catholic friends, that we may be enabled thus in a right spirit to seek for truth, and to follow the example of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2nd Cor. 10, 5).

PAPAL INFALLIBILITY, IN CONNECTION WITH THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

The Church of Rome has never formally defined the seat of infallibility. The opinions of her doctors have been divided on this point. Some have placed it in the *Church Diffusive*—i.e., the whole body of the faithful scattered throughout the world. Some in the *Church Representative*—i.e., in the whole body of the Episcopate. Some, again, regard the Decrees of a General Council as infallible. Some require that these Decrees should be confirmed by the Pope. Whilst some, lastly, maintain that the Pope himself, when speaking *ex cathedra*, is infallible on all questions of faith and morals. This last is the *ultramontane* theory. It has gradually displaced all rival theories, and is now acquiesced in by all Romanists, with the exception of the few who still struggle to maintain the nearly extinct principles of Gallicanism. The promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by the present Pope, Pius IX., on the 8th of December, 1854, was the crowning point and triumph of the ultramontane theory. The personal infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was implied, if not asserted, in the bull by which that dogma was enjoined. The Bishops who were present at the promulgation of the dogma had nothing to do with it. Neither they, nor

the other Bishops to whom the Pope had written a circular, with the view of consulting them on the matter, contributed a particle of *authority* to the dogma. That this is so, we have the evidence of one of the most zealous partisans of the new dogma, Cardinal Gousset, Archbishop of Rheims, who has written a bulky volume of more than eight hundred pages, chiefly to prove that Pius IX. pronounced the definition of the 8th of December on his own authority, and independent of the Bishops.^a This being so, it may be useful to inquire how far the past history of the Church of Rome countenances the notion of the personal infallibility of the Pope. And if it should appear, upon a review of that history, that many Popes have erred in questions of faith; and, moreover, that all of them, up to a comparatively recent period, seem to have been utterly ignorant of their possessing the attribute of infallibility; it may well raise grave doubts in the mind of every reflecting Roman Catholic as to the binding authority of that Decree which raised the opinion respecting the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin to the rank of a doctrine *de fide*.

The following examples of fallibility and actual error on the part of the Bishops of Rome, in matters relating to faith, are well known, and have—most of them, at least—been already noticed in our pages:—

1. Tertullian (adv. Praxeam, c. 1) speaks of a Bishop of Rome who fell into error by officially approving the heresy of Montanus. This Pope is supposed to have been Eleutherius (A.D. 177-192), a saint in the Roman Calendar. He subsequently revoked the approbation so bestowed; but by doing so admitted his fallibility.

2. Pope Liberius (A.D. 352-366), in consequence of his vigorous resistance to Arianism, was banished to Beræ, in Thrace. But at the end of two years' exile he was induced to adopt that heresy. He approved and received as Catholic the Arian confession or symbol set forth by the Council of Sirmium; and signed, moreover, the condemnation of Athanasius, the great champion of Catholic truth.

3. Pope Innocent I. (A.D. 402-417), acting as Pope, solemnly condemned one of the bishops of Macedonia, Photinus by name. The Pope subsequently admitted that he had been mistaken, and revoked the sentence of condemnation. He did not believe that the Papal decrees were infallible. Innocent is a saint in the Roman Calendar.

4. Pope Zozimus (A.D. 417-18), also a saint, after having, along with his clergy, examined the heretical writings of Pelagius, pronounced them orthodox, and their doctrine true and Catholic, in a solemn letter addressed to all the bishops of Africa. This same Pelagius had been condemned as a heretic by Zozimus's predecessor, Innocent I. So that, not only did Zozimus himself fall into error, but, by reversing a doctrinal decision of his predecessor, he showed that he did not believe in the doctrine of papal infallibility. Augustine and Prosper frequently refer to the error of the Papal See in this matter, and thereby plainly show that the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope was equally unknown to him.

5. Pope Vigilius (A.D. 540-55) changed his opinion several times respecting the "Three Chapters." He first approved, and finally condemned them. His own words are, "As to what has been done by me in favour of these Three Chapters, and in defence of them, we revoke and annul it by our present decree." Vigilius, then, did not believe in his own infallibility. One of his successors (Pelagius II.) excused the error of Vigilius by saying that the latter did not well understand the nature of the writings in question, because of his imperfect knowledge of Greek! A curious apology for an infallible judge of controversy. However, in making such an apology, Pelagius, of course, shows that the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope was unknown to him.

6. Pope Honorius I. (A.D. 625-38) fell into the heresy of the Monothelites, and was solemnly condemned as a heretic by two of his successors, Leo II. and Adrian II., and by no less than three General Councils. The following are the words of Pope Leo II. (in his letter to Constantine Pogonatus):—"We anathematize the inventors of this new error, Theodore, Cyrus, and Sergius, and with them Honorius, who, so far from governing the Apostolic Church according to the doctrine of the Apostles, was compelled, by a profane treachery, to ruin the purity of the faith." Pope Adrian's letter to the Fathers of the Eighth General Council contains the remarkable statement, that "heresy is the only crime for which it is permitted to inferiors to resist a Pope;" thus clearly admitting that such a crime is one which other Popes besides Honorius might be guilty of. Neither Pope Leo II., nor Adrian II., nor the Sixth, Seventh, or Eighth General Councils were aware that infallibility belonged to the Pope.

7. After the death of Pope Formosus (A.D. 896), his next successor but one, Pope Stephen VII. (or, according to some, VI.), assembled a Council, and caused the body of Formosus to be disinterred and thrown into the Tiber. Moreover, Stephen in council decided that Formosus' ordinations were invalid, and re-ordained several. Pope Theodorus II., who came next but one after Stephen, annulled the decree of the latter, and recognised as valid the orders of those whom Stephen had declared to be not ordained. Theodorus' acts were ratified by his successor, Pope John IX. On the other hand, not long after, Pope Sergius III. (A.D. 904-11) pronounced in favour of Stephen, and declared the ordinations of Formosus to be null and void. Thus, then, we have two Popes, Stephen and Sergius, in direct opposition to two others, John and Theodorus, and that, too, on a most important question, in which the well-being of the Church for ages was concerned—the validity of certain ordinations. It is perfectly plain that neither party in this memorable dispute could have regarded the other as invested with an infallible judgment.

8. Pope Gregory VII. (1073-85), notwithstanding the exalted opinion which he held of the prerogatives of the Papal See, believed neither his own infallibility nor that of

^a *La Croyance Generale, &c.*, par l'Eme. et Rme. Cardinal Gousset, Archeveque de Rheims.

* These lines were written for our February number, but were unavoidably postponed from want of room.

^b It is surely not without some purpose that it has been repeated no less than four times in the inspired history that he set out on his journey to Damascus to persecute the Christians with the concurrence and authority of the High Priest.

^c If that frequently quoted promise of our Lord to his Apostle "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28, 20) meant that the teachers of his Church in every age would possess the gift of infallibility, and that following their directions and advice would be the only sure way of being led to the truth, it would follow (interpreting the Old Testament on the same principles) that St. Paul was in the right when he persecuted Christ, and that his error lay in becoming a Christian, because similar promises of God's perpetual presence were frequently given to the Jewish Church. See e.g., Deut. 31, 6 and 8; Isaiah 41, 10, and 43, 5, &c. Does not this clearly prove that the principle, adopted by so many of our fellow-countrymen, of following, in all religious matters, blindly and without examination, the advice and direction of their spiritual advisers, is a principle wholly destructive of all Christianity? Had the Jews all adopted it none of them would have followed Christ. Had Paul acted on it, he would never have become a Christian.